

Sailing is an activity for all ages

By **RON HOBSON**
Senior Sports Writer

You're never too old to learn and that's especially true when it comes to sailing.

Adult sailing instruction is one of the most popular programs offered by the Duxbury Bay Maritime School. More than 200 adults will enroll this summer in the 12-hour classes and many do so just to be on the water with their kids.

"You start from scratch teaching adults just as you do when you begin kids in a sailing program," said Veronica Ploude, director of the adult sailing program. "We have adults from the early 20s to the early 60s. I think the interest comes from living on the South Shore and seeing what goes on in the bay."

Ploude explained the profile of her students.

"Usually a mom or dad who have kids who are interested in sailing," she said. "That's one aspect, but there is also a group of young professionals. They may do golf or tennis, but they haven't been involved in boating."

One of the students who fits the profile is Kristin Fotta of Duxbury. She has three boys - Andrew, 6, Christopher, 8, and Alex, 10 - who sail and she started to sail with them after she took the adult sailing classes a year ago. Now Fotta is hooked on

sailing.

"I never sailed when I was young. I rode horses competitively," Fotta said. "The maritime school began five years ago and my boys started (sailing) and I started it to learn with them. I was fortunate to have one-on-one sailing lessons at the time and learned a lot. So I have been able to keep up with my kids. My 10-year-old is now into racing and we are going to start traveling around New England to attend Opti (Optimist class) regattas." (The Optimist is the small boat on which children learn to sail and there's an active fleet up along the coast).

"It's such a healthy sport and so much fun for the kids to learn," Fotta said. "I think, as an adult learning something new, you want to learn so you absorb it easier. I had a fantastic time . . . and it helped me learn how to sail our 17-foot sailboat. We even chartered a 48-foot sailboat down in the Virgin Islands and used some of the skills we learned as a family on a larger boat."

The instruction for adults is basically the same as for the youngsters, but it's more tailored to their hours and time constraints.

"We start from a 'try-sailing' day where we go out for two hours and get the feel for the boat and see if you really like it," Ploude said. "If you get seasick, sunburned and hate it, you don't have to make a commitment. If

you do like it, there is a 12-hour basics class. You learn everything from rigging the boat to getting it off the docks to going out for a nice day sail and putting it back on the dock."

Ploude is a product of a sailing program in her native Miami. She made sailing a career after graduating from the University of Central Florida. She noted that adult sailing is more popular in Duxbury than Miami, even though good sailing days are endless in Miami.

Rental boats are available for those who become proficient in sailing.

"We do have a boat rental program where you can rent it for the entire season or on an hourly basis," Ploude said. "We have different kinds of activities, such as the Tuesday family fun nights. We have different theme nights, like Hawaiian themes, so everyone that has taken the classes can take part in these activities as a follow-up to the classes."

Among the boats used at the

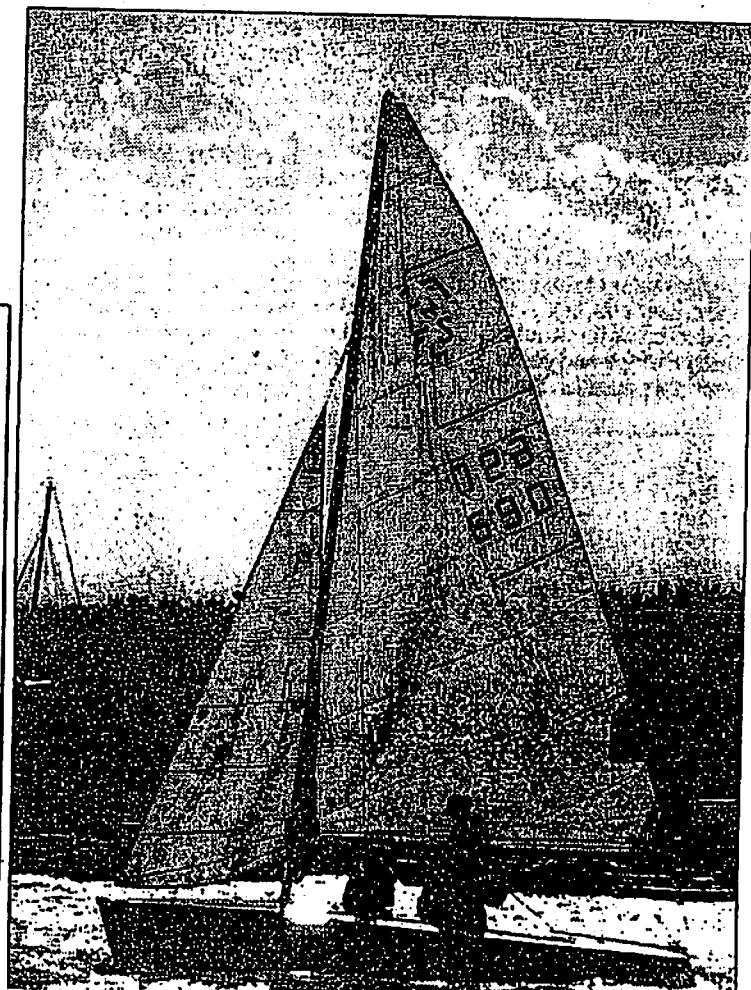
Duxbury Bay Maritime School is the Flying Scot, which is a 19-foot stable boat. The school also has the Marshall 15, a catboat-rigged day sailer, and the O'Day 23, which is used in the disabled teaching program.

Fotta is a big booster of the school.

"It's a non-membership club which is open to everyone," Fotta said. "There are people from New Hampshire who come down to classes. You can treat it like a camp and spend every day of the summer (at the school). My boys and I are always out on the water now. It's a great place to be."

The basic sailing course for adults costs \$300, which covers an instructional book, instructor and use of the boat. There is a husband and wife sailing program as well as a women's program. Most classes are coed and run to the end of September.

For more information, contact the school at 781-934-7555. The school's web site is www.duxbayms.com.



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